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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 MANAGUA 000247

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STATE PASS HHS FOR SECRETARY LEAVITT AND OFFICE OF GLOBAL
HEALTH AFFAIRS (STEIGER AND CORREA-DE-ARAUJO)
MCA FOR AMBASSADOR DANILOVICH
DEPT FOR WHA A/S SHANNON, WHA/CEN

E.O. 12958: DECL: 01/29/2017

TAGS: PGOV PINR KDEM NU PREL

SUBJECT: SECRETARY LEAVITT,S MEETING WITH PANAMANIAN VICE
PRESIDENT LEWIS AND HEALTH MINISTER ALLEYNE

Classified By: Ambassador Paul A. Trivelli. Reasons 1.4 (B,D).

¶1. (C) Summary: On January 9, 2007, the U.S. Presidential Delegation (Presdel), led by Health and Human Services (HHS) Secretary Michael Leavitt, discussed with Panamanian Vice President Samuel Lewis and Health Minister Camilo Alleyne a new regional health-care training initiative. Alleyne reiterated his Government's commitment to the initiative and offered to assist with the drafting of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) and other deliberations. Vice President Lewis conveyed his interest in a Millennium Challenge Account (MCA) program for his country, even though he recognizes Panama's GDP exceeds the eligibility threshold. End Summary.

GOP is Ready for Health Initiative

¶2. (SBU) Secretary Leavitt outlined his vision for the new regional health initiative, whose centerpiece is a regional training facility in Panama that will train hundreds of health workers from the region -- in particular nurses, technicians, community health workers and other health providers from rural areas. He thanked Vice President Lewis and Health Minister Alleyne for the Panamanian Government's (GOP) support for the initiative. An enthused Alleyne replied that he is "ready to begin," noting the proposed site for the training academy, a hospital at the former Howard Air Force Base in the reverted Canal Zone, will be readily accessible and could even offer specialized surgery. He shared he had discussed the initiative with his Nicaraguan counterpart, incoming Health Minister Maritza Quant, who was receptive. Alleyne added that Panama has already recruited a group of indigenous medical students to start training shortly. He next referred to the GOP's desire to use the project to help Panama achieve its United Nations Millennium Development goals.

¶3. (SBU) The Secretary described the next steps in the program: drafting an MOU, visiting the participating countries, and possibly signing the agreement in a regional venue. Alleyne offered to help draft the MOU and to undertake additional activities to facilitate negotiations and prompt implementation. He promised to send his input on the text of the MOU to the Secretary by late January. He suggested a team from Central American Health Ministries then

travel to Washington to negotiate the MOU with Secretary Leavitt and his team. The Secretary thanked Alleyne for his offer and suggested that, following the Washington meeting, he could travel to the region in the March 15-April 15 timeframe to finalize the document and promote the program. To the Secretary's query regarding a venue to launch the health initiative, Lewis suggested the Organization of American States meeting of Heads of State in Panama in June 2007, or perhaps during the System of Integration of Central America meeting, to be held in Belize in the spring.

We Want MCC Too

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¶4. (SBU) Vice President Lewis almost rhetorically noted Panama's desire to participate in a MCA program and asserted Panama's GDP does not reflect the reality that 40 percent of Panama's population is poor. (Note: Panama's income per capita well exceeds the eligibility threshold for MCC assistance. End Note.)

¶5. (U) Participants:

Panama:

Vice President Samuel Lewis
Minister of Health Camilo Alleyne
Panamanian Ambassador to Nicaragua Miguel Lecaro
Minister of Foreign Affairs Advisor Demetrio Olacirequi

U.S.:

Secretary Michael Leavitt
MCC CEO John Danilovich
Assistant Secretary Tom Shannon
Ambassador Paul Trivelli
HHS Special Assistant to the Secretary for International Affairs William Steiger
USAID Director Alex Dickie
USAID Health and Education Director Connie Johnson
MCA-N Country Director Matt Bohn
Political Counselor/notetaker Victoria Alvarado

¶6. (U) This cable was cleared by Secretary Leavitt, MCC CEO Ambassador Danilovich, and Department of State A/S Shannon.

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